

**Waukegan, IL** -- U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) joined Tom Skinner, Region 5 Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Lt. Col. Norm Grady, Chicago District Deputy Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to discuss a \$200,000 Waukegan Harbor sampling project that will determine the extent of sediment contamination plus costs and timelines associated with further cleanup. The winter sampling project is the result of Congressman Kirk's efforts to bring together federal and state agencies with jurisdiction over a proposed cleanup of Waukegan Harbor. Kirk convened a meeting last July which included representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. and Illinois EPA, the City of Waukegan, the Waukegan Port District, the Lake County Board, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Waukegan Community Action Group and the Illinois Attorney Generals Office. The July gathering has fostered monthly meetings between the governing parties and resulted in the two-week-long harbor sampling program being announced today.

"This federally funded sampling project is a necessary step toward determining the extent of PCB-contaminated sediment that remains in the harbor and the costs associated with removing it," said Congressman Kirk during a press availability today following a project briefing held aboard a testing barge in Waukegan Harbor. "I am very pleased that the Army Corps, EPA, and the community have come together and we are finally moving forward to determine the appropriate next steps toward removing the remaining contaminated sediments. Revitalizing downtown Waukegan and its lakefront continues to be among my top economic development priorities. The key to unlocking Waukegan's economic potential lies in the environmental cleanup of the lakefront and that begins with the cleanup of Waukegan Harbor."

During a two week testing period, samples will be collected from 15 locations in the harbor with laboratory results expected in about 90 days. Harbor sediment samples will be gathered by an Army Corps and EPA team with Army Corps contractor, Patrick Engineering, providing resources. The Army Corps has long-planned for the navigational dredging of Waukegan Harbor. Today, working with EPA, IEPA and local stakeholders, the Army Corps is working to expand the project to include environmental dredging of the harbor. Waukegan Harbor has been designated by the International Joint Commission as a Great Lakes "Area of Concern."

"I applaud Illinois EPA for their outreach which has engaged a number of community-oriented groups focused on revitalizing Waukegan," said Congressman Kirk. "EPA's efforts to help the Latino Coalition of Lake County form an Environmental Justice group for the entire city and their work 12 years ago to found the Waukegan Harbor Community Action Group, speaks to this federal agency's commitment to our community."

Once test results are compiled, about 90 days following sample collection, the group will reconvene to determine appropriate next steps and funding needs.